

FRIENDSHIP OF OLD JOHN HENRY

BY SMITH D. FRY

ONCE upon a time there was a tariff bill pending, and the newspapers were strenuously struggling for the first news of an authentic nature concerning it.

"Old John Henry" was a new member of Congress. The average "new member" is a nonentity; but in this instance Old John Henry was not a nonentity. He had been Governor of his State, and had been a vigorous Governor too. The man who can become Governor is usually a big man locally, and usually he regards himself as a national character. Usually, also, he is mistaken. There are forty-six States, and every Governor is not a national character.

Old John Henry had been an exceptional executive, and his work had been of such a conspicuous nature as to warrant the Speaker of the House in making him a member of the commanding Committee on Ways and Means. It was a rare honor, especially when such an important measure as a tariff bill was pending.

It happened that there was a newspaper man in the State whence Old John Henry came who had used all his ability and skill in years gone by to bring Old John Henry to the front and keep him before the people. It was that newspaper man who had been chiefly responsible for the boom that had made his favorite Governor. Moreover, he had been foremost in booming him for Congress, until he had at last been nominated and elected. And, still further, having gone to Washington as newspaper correspondent, the same energetic friend had made the acquaintance of the Speaker and all other public men in the national capital. It was he who first suggested to the Speaker the advisability of appointing Old John Henry to the Committee on Ways and Means.

Well, the time came when the bill should be reported to the House. There was a daily newspaper that promised to pay five hundred dollars for a copy of the bill the night before it was to be reported. That was an inducement for all hustlers for news to hustle with vigor. And they hustled.

Old John Henry was called from the House by the newspaper man to whom he owed so much, informed of the prize, and was asked for a copy of the bill.

"That is impossible," replied the statesman. "Each majority member of the committee has a copy of the bill; but the chairman has marked on each page of the bill the name of the member to whom the copy has been given. So, you see, no one can give up his copy without grave danger of being discovered, and that would mean disgrace."

"I comprehend that fully," said the news gatherer, "and you know that you are perfectly safe in my hands. Nobody will ever know where I got the news. Moreover, I am particularly hard up just now, on account of sickness in my family, and am in dire need of the money that is offered for the bill. You positively must help me out."

"Well, come to the hotel this evening and we'll talk it over," was the reply.

At half-past seven that evening the news gleaner was in the apartment of Old John Henry. On the hallrack his old overcoat was hanging and a copy of the coveted bill

was sticking out of the pocket. This discovery had barely been made when the dear old wife of the statesman came into the room and said:

"I'm so sorry that you came tonight! I mean to say that I'm sorry you did not wait until tomorrow night; for I want to have a long talk with you about Henry's prospect of going to the Senate. But tonight we are going to the theater, and you must excuse us, and excuse us for going right away and leaving you."

"Never mind, Mother," said the statesman. "He can sit here and read the home papers until we return. Here is a box of fine cigars. You will wait for us, won't you?"

"Certainly, I will," was the reply. "You will find me right here when you return."

Then they went down the corridor to the elevator. Long before they had reached the ground floor the newspaper man had grabbed that bill and rushed down stairs. He went to an office where there were three stenographers awaiting him. To one after another he read five or six pages, and soon all three of the typewriters were clicking merrily. To a fourth typewriter the correspondent betook himself, and began pounding the keys on the last ten pages of the bill. By half-past nine the bill had been copied and compared. By ten o'clock it was being wired into the office of the managing editor of the daily newspaper and the correspondent had a check for five hundred dollars in his pocket.

By a quarter after ten he was back at the hotel, sitting in the same apartment, reading the home papers, and smoking those fine cigars. The old overcoat was hanging on the rack, and the bill was in the pocket, just where it had been when the old couple went out.

"Well, I hope you have had a pleasant evening," was the greeting of Mother Blank when they returned.

"A very pleasant evening indeed," was the reply; "but I should not have waited all this time had you not told me that you wanted to talk about Henry's chances for the Senate. I'm ready to help, you know."

Then they talked politics for awhile. Mother never knew, and Old John Henry never knew, how that bill happened to be in print the morning before it was reported to the House. Several months elapsed, and one morning at the Capitol Old John Henry smiled as he clasped the hand of his friend, and asked:

"Did you get the five hundred?"

"Betcher boots!" was the reply.

BURSTING STEEL

AN experiment that demonstrated the capacity of steel to endure greater pressure than the hardest stone was recently made in Germany. Corundum was chosen for the stone, and small cubes of both substances were placed under pressure. A weight of six tons smashed the corundum; but forty-two tons were required to crush the steel. When the steel did give way, the effects are described as remarkable. With a loud explosion the metal flew into powder, and its sparks are said to have bored minute holes in the crushing machine.

THE SQUARE FAIRIES

Continued from page 9

began to boom. "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve!" At the second they began to hurry about on various errands. A change was stealing over the Square,—the moonlight carpet seemed to roll itself away; the canopy overhead disappeared. Caterina looked at the four boys, and saw that they too were changing. They were growing up very fast; growing ugly and wrinkled and bald and bearded. They rubbed their eyes dazedly and seemed not to see her or one another. Before the twelfth stroke had sounded Caterina herself began to feel queer and sleepy. Things grew dim around her. At the last stroke she felt a tiny shock, and presently found herself lying in her little bed, with the rowan tree brushing against the window.

"It is all right," whispered the tree. "Now go to sleep."

And obediently Caterina slept.

THE next morning Caterina looked down into the Square, wondering. It was as dirty and ugly as ever. Already the lines of clothes were stretched across from wall to wall. Already some pale children were squatted on the grass, and a sick mother with her baby leaned against the rowan tree.

"How lovely it was; but now how ugly it is!" sighed Caterina. "I wonder if it all really happened?"

Just then she saw four men approaching the Square from four different directions. One was tall and sandy haired. One was short and fat. One was black and straight like a soldier. One was little and crooked. Caterina gasped. They were her four boys, grown up!

They strolled up to the entrance, nodding to one another coldly. Caterina saw them enter the Square and stand apart, looking curiously about, up and down, at the children and the tree and the drying clothes. Presently they drew together, and Caterina saw them talking. How she longed to hear what was said! But she was up too high for that.

The men seemed to be arguing earnestly about something. O'Reilly, Cohen, and Patoff talked and gesticulated eagerly; but Powhatan Endicott Jones stood with arms folded and replied only by shaking his head. Finally he drew away from the other three and began to poke in the mud of the spring with his stick. The Irishman with a laugh went up to the tree and laid his hand upon it. Patoff and the Jew were looking about



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at the children and the worried mothers, as if they saw them for the first time.

Suddenly, without any apparent cause, came a tricky gust of wind. The rowan tree twisted and bent low before it, and a shower of red berries fell upon the group in the Square. They looked up with a start, as if suddenly reminded of something. They looked up into the tree, through the tree; and Caterina, eagerly pressing her cheek against the iron grating, felt the four pairs of eyes fixed upon her face. For a moment they were all quite still. Then whimsically Powhatan Endicott Jones took off his hat to the little girl with the crutches. The other three instinctively did likewise.

A minute later Caterina saw the three turn again to one another, but now with a new manner. They drew close together, and she saw them point around the Square, up at the buildings, at the tree, the spring, the pale trespassers. Their faces grew kind and gentle. Presently, after more talk, they all shook hands as if coming to some agreement, and thereafter Caterina strained to watch them leave the Square, arm in arm, in the best of good fellowship.

"Caterina!" exclaimed the rowan tree. "Caterina, the Square is saved!"

"Oh!" gasped Caterina, clasping her hands blissfully.

"They are going to pull down all these buildings and make the Square into a park, free always to the people of this district," went on the tree. "They will put up fine new tenements on the streets opposite, and you shall live in one of them, my dear, close by me still. And there will always be a place for the Fairies to dance in, and the children to play, and for you to come and gossip with me every day. Each man has remembered his promise, though he knows not the reason of the others. The four good men will give the park together, and it will be called Powhatan Square. How that will please our Mayor!"

SO that is how Powhatan Square came to be one of the prettiest little parks in the whole city, with its rowan tree in the middle, a fountain playing all day long into a marble basin, and with its grassy lawn free from "Keep Off" signs. And it was in this park, where the Fairies lived so happy ever after, that Caterina grew rosy and strong, and learned to do without her crutches as she had done on that memorable Hallowe'en.

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